

# Mare Nostrum, or On Water Matters

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Probably by the time you get there, you'll no longer be able to see Europe. If I don't see it, that'll be because the place never existed, [...] because for things to exist there are two essential conditions, that a man should see them and be able to give them a name. (Saramago 1985: 73)

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Migration is weighing on the Old Continent. Leaving a London theatre one chilly evening last spring after seeing a play about migrants, perilous sea voyages and the recurring horror of failed crossings, we found ourselves grappling with a distinct awareness of the limits of performance in the face of this most immediate and urgent of realities. What was it, exactly, that we were looking to performance to do, ethically, aesthetically and politically? What did we expect? Such questions emerged alongside our understanding that forced migration is already caught within the domain of representation: we classify migration, we legislate migration, we prevent or enable migration, we produce narratives and images about migration, we devise military strategies that criminalise migration. But the question that remains insistently present (and what is really confronting and confounding Europe at the moment) is that of what a body may find means to do within and without the limits of its representation. Bodies classified, legislated, prevented or enabled, narrativised and imaged, criminalised and yet ultimately uncontrollable.

There is a feeling of vertiginousness in all of this, of rapid change both in terms of the immediate realities of migration into the EU and of the proliferation of artistic and activist response. Drawing on recent theatre and performance interventions, our conversation brings to the surface continuities between artistic, activist, social and legislated engagements. The two works that form our starting point were staged in the summer of 2015, just before the most

documented but least surprising migrant crisis ever would begin to gather pace across Europe. The first is The Dead are Coming / Die Toten kommen by German activist collective Center for Political Beauty, who advocate an 'aggressive humanism' as they exhume drowned migrants' bodies and transport them to Berlin for burial. These transportations to the symbolic centre of Fortress Europe were crowd-funded and facilitated with the agreement of the families of the deceased. The second work is Case Farmakonisi or The Trial of Water, a documentary theatre piece produced in the Athens Festival and directed by Anestis Azas, who has worked closely with Rimini Protokoll. This work is based on testimonies around the deaths of migrant three women and eight children off the shore of Farmakonisi island in the East Aegean in January 2014 and attempts to raise questions about the failure of judicial systems when confronted with migration. Both, in markedly different ways, engage with reality and materiality, advocating 'authentic' ways of staging suffering, injustice and their aftermath.

As 'tides' of refugees emerge into southern, central and northern Europe, making their routes impossible to follow or trace, it appears that the need for representation, embodiment, encounter and imagination has never been greater. But what could possibly be an adequate response (by performance makers, creative activists and audiences) to a status quo that sees the Mediterranean relentlessly doubled as the safe passage and gravesite for thousands of individuals, every year, who attempt the journey to Europe? Our dialogue probes a series of questions, investigates performative methods and ends, sets up comparisons and reflects on possible futures.

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MZ: 'The sea, the sea, who will be able to drain it dry?' (Seferis [1935] 1981: 51) What is it that drives us both, as individuals and performance scholars, to think about the sea, the perilous crossings across dark waters and their representation? How can we navigate this unbounded and endless territory? Thinking of the sea brings back memories of childhood all sounds dissolving whilst floating on the cold waters of the Aegean. The sea is also inextricably

linked to mythologies that have shaped national identity; for example, The Odyssey. There are other, recent myths or at least parallels that are often drawn with reference to contemporary migration that I am skeptical about. I have a series of questions about the analogy that is often invoked between migrants fleeing conflict zones and arriving by boat to Greece today with the plight of Greek migrants crossing the Aegean, fleeing Asia Minor in 1922. Is migration then and now as the same thing? What are the politics of expressing the conviction that Greece is a hospitable nation historically? This skepticism about what Greece stands in for in a wider European framework, what it does, what it can and what it should do when faced with migrants has rippled beyond that specific location, because Greece is synechdochically the South-East border of Fortress Europe.

EC: '[I]t was Kahutia Te Rangi who traveled here on the back of a whale'. (Ihimaera 1987: 22) For me growing up, the sea always meant the wide horizons and fathomlessness of the South Pacific. It felt like the last place on earth a boat carrying desperate people would appear, even though I always knew that boats had carried my own European ancestors there. As a New Zealander (though also a British citizen) who has lived for extended periods in Australia and the UK, I'm struck by an awareness of how so-called refugee crises in Europe and in Australia (New Zealand's geography allows it to dodge the limelight on this) are destabilising long-standing assumptions about who sets global agendas. About who leads the charge. The explicitly militaristic, muscular approach of Australia, which is also aspirational in its unequivocal conception of what nationhood means, contrasts with Europe's struggle to reconcile its ostensible traditions of hospitality and of supranational community with its competing nationalistic impulses. Agenda setting used to be Europe's prerogative but we're increasingly seeing calls for Europe to adopt an Australian-style immigration system – to look to one of its former migrant outposts as a model.

MZ: Indeed, Europe is caught at a crossroads, maintaining a narrative of liberal, human rights-driven hospitality whilst fostering a reactionary crisis management, which dictates policies both inside and outside the European

Union. After the limitations of EU migration and asylum policies were undeniably exposed this summer, a Council of Europe meeting was called in an attempt at addressing these matters and establishing a 'credible European migration policy'. During that meeting, EU leaders agreed on a list of priorities, which included providing substantial financial support to institutional bodies such as the UNHCR and assisting countries (such as Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan) that are close to the conflict zone. However, they failed to reach agreement on an equitable way of distributing migrants across member-states, a thorny issue that exposes the asymmetries between European centre and periphery.

EC: In some ways, what you're describing is the EU leaders looking to join up this imperative of 'credibility' with extraterritorial strategies that would keep the problem away.

MZ: For example, former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi signing a 'friendship agreement' with Libya in 2008, declaring that with this agreement 'fewer clandestine migrants [would leave] Libyan shores for Italian' (The New York Times).

EC: Certainly, in Australia, hasty and expensive geographical outsourcing is all too familiar. Successive recent governments have tried to establish refugee transfer deals with Malaysia and Cambodia (the former of which is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention), in addition to its large corporate-run detention facilities on the islands of Nauru, Christmas Island and Manus in Papua New Guinea. This normalisation of vast distance separating the nation from the majority of its asylum-seeking outsiders is like some great inoculation project for a body politic still persistently neurotic about its nearness to Southeast Asia. On top of this, Australia's blunt excision legislation, involving the removal of migration territory for the purposes of irregular maritime migration, now encompasses the entire continent, which means that no 'unlawful' arrivals can have actually 'arrived' (Migration Amendment Act 2013).

MZ: If EU legislation is perhaps less blunt than in Australia, the current migrant crisis has exposed European power structures. As a consequence of the

refugee crisis, one of the cornerstones of the European project, the promise of 'free movement', established through the 1985 Schengen Agreement, has been radically challenged. Only a few weeks after Angela Merkel estimated that Germany could receive up to 800,000 refugees during 2015, the country has recently reinstalled controls at its border with Austria.

EC: As far as movements across seas are concerned, the advent of the unwanted migrant on the shores of Europe puts pressure on the concept of 'innocent passage', a well-established law of the sea that speaks to an originary idea of maritime zones as free. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) clarifies that 'Passage is innocent so long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State'. An entire category of language is needed to stand up against the undeniably evocative 'innocent passage'. So we have 'unauthorised', 'irregular', 'undocumented', 'unlawful', 'illegal'. Crucially, these are applied to people at least as often as to the method or vessel of their passage. Asylum seekers and other migrants who attempt risky sea voyages therefore slot into place as bodies whose appearance on the horizons of the world's so-called developed coastlines must, naturally, threaten 'peace, good order or security'. This is one of the key paradigms from which we begin.

MZ: We should talk about something that's not that innocent – though some say it's legal – and that's pushbacks. This is a strategy often employed by Greek and Italian coast guard police in order to halt or deter any passage that is not deemed 'innocent'. They are effectively a breach to the international refugee law. In Case Farmakonisi, photo-journalist Yiorgos Moutafis gives his expert account of such operations in the Aegean Sea, accompanied by footage he took with permission while on board of one of the Greek coast guard vessels. The piece features an anonymous testimony of a senior officer who denies the implementation of such measures to tackle 'illegal' migration. Survivors of the Farmakonisi disaster have filed a case against the Greek coast guard in the European Court of Human Rights, testifying that the Greek coast guard attempted to 'push back' their vessel to Turkish waters and this resulted into the boat capsizing, throwing some passengers overboard and trapping some others

inside the hull. Whose testimony is more credible, according to the law? Case Farmakonisi is particularly concerned with that question.

EC: Australia's use of pushbacks to Indonesia is one of the ways that it technically preempts noncitizens' 'unlawful arrival'. It has even used the extraordinarily dubious strategy of detention at sea. A High Court challenge to the detention of Sri Lankan asylum seekers on a customs vessel at the end of 2014 (a decision made by Australia's National Security Committee of Cabinet) found the detention to be lawful (CPCF v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection). And as far as access to these zones is concerned, the idea that a photo-journalist would be permitted to accompany the coast guard, as in the Greek case, is almost laughably improbable in Australia. Earlier this year, the Minister for Immigration refused to discuss claims that Australian officials made (illegal) cash payments to the crew of a people smuggling vessel to turn back to Indonesia by invoking what he called 'a longstanding policy of the government not to comment on on-water matters' (The Guardian).

MZ: In the European framework, there is a striking analogy, I think, between pushback mechanisms at sea with the wider structure of EU migration policy, particularly the controversial 2003 Dublin II regulation, which can effectively 'push back' asylum seekers from a central European country to the country where they first entered, a country of the periphery. The crisis of migration haunts and marks contemporary politics in the continent, as demonstrated by the incidents of xenophobia and racist violence in countries of the 'New Europe' (Serbia, Croatia, Hungary) and the 'sneering' of the Old Continent (Austria, Germany) towards such countries for their inability to respond adequately.

EC: Despite its obvious intentions to shake the EU establishment, The Dead are Coming does not escape this contemptuous tone. Confronted with the shockingly inadequate storage conditions of a morgue in Sicily, the collective's exclamation, 'This is how Europe is treating its victims' seems oblivious to wealth discrepancies and demonstrates how the crisis ripples beyond 'us' and 'them' demarcations on ethnic or racial terms to expose other asymmetries of class and infrastructure.

MZ: In other words, Europe's Others do not only arrive in boats from the East; they also reside in the Eastern or Southern countries of the continent.

EC: Yes, and economically determined configurations extend into the sea, where we have the carving up of 'territorial waters', 'contiguous zones', 'exclusive economic zones' and 'international waters'. Language is endlessly revealing in this context – contemporary European terminology unsuitably claims moral ground for its governmental surveillance paradigms: 'Operation Mare Nostrum' and more recently Frontex's 'Operation Triton' both fuse ancient imperial formulations with the 'lore' of mythology and with the modern international 'law' that criminalises the unauthorised transportation of human beings. There is a certain gravitas to this language of supranational administration.

MZ: Actually, the reference to the Mediterranean Sea as 'Mare Nostrum' does not only allude to imperial Roman times but also the rise of nationalism in modern times, as the term was revived in Mussolini's fascist Italy. The language of supranational administration that you are describing traces a historical linearity between past and present Europe – and its perennial issue of identifying and excluding a barbarian Other outside.

EC: This justification of bureaucratic obfuscation chimes in very obvious ways the language of state secrecy and national emergency – long codified mechanisms of exceptionality. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the terminology devised by Australia for its successive post-2001 border protection mechanisms – 'The Pacific Solution', 'Operation Relex', 'Operation Resolute', 'Operation Sovereign Borders' – amplifies a perceived contiguity between migration and military domains. The fog of war transmutes into the fog of the sea.

MZ: There is this military, 'muscular' language used to construct realities – for example the 'Libertas, Securitas, Justitia' motto in the mission statement of Frontex – but there is also language formulated to excuse measures and policies. In Case Farmakonisi, the company attempts to reenact the testimony



of the senior coast guard official, who first expresses his curiosity in the ways that theatre might attempt to capture and respond to dying at sea. 'How are you going to tackle the issue? Are you writing a play?' he eagerly, if not patronisingly, asks the director Anestis Azas and the dramaturg and social anthropologist Martha Bouziouri who visit him for an interview. But what is interesting is that he does not hide behind state secrecy but attempts to speak 'common sense' to the artists. He repeatedly claims that the artists cannot understand what it means to work at sea but he emphasises that what matters the most in such operations is that no human life is lost – which is plain common sense! Such language is similarly vague and foggy as he does not give specific answers about the processes that were used during the night of the fatal incident. The work subtly parodies the absurdity of the official language by inviting audience members to join Theano Metaxa, the actress who 'performs' the officer, in order to demonstrate the official account of the events. Twenty-six audience members join the actors onstage, each one of them representing a migrant. They are placed in a way that simulates the seating arrangements on the boat and at some point, the coast guard officer orders audience members standing on the left to get up in order to demonstrate how such an action might have led on the boat capsizing. Obviously, on the fixity of the theatre stage, no balance is challenged, nothing happens. The account appears insubstantial and crucially, this mode of representation, the language of the theatre stage is rendered incomplete.

EC: On this question of language, the present tense title The Dead are Coming / Die Toten kommen also has an atemporal prophetic quality (at once reminiscent, for better or worse, of schlocky zombie-invasion tropes and of Christian eschatological ideas about the rapture).

MZ: Could this title work as an ironic comment on the scaremongering campaigns launched by a particular kind of mainstream media that warn citizens of the possible consequences that the 'floods' of migrants might bring about? But in its geographical sense, the project frames the activists' retrieval of human remains as a righteous passage from Europe's southern fringes (Greece and Sicily) to its fortress heart (Germany). Through the relocation of the dead,



the sea arrives in Germany. The wave of the Mediterranean momentarily reaches the centre of Europe and leaves Europeans at sea.

EC: Yes, I agree that a certain irony is detectable in the title, The Dead are Coming; bizarrely, in this instance, one of the main peddlers of scaremongering, Britain's The Daily Mail, covered the project in detail, without rancour! (Hall 2015) Case Farmakonisi or The Trial of Water is a compelling title, too.

MZ: Indeed. Unlike the metaphysical quality of the German piece, the title of the Greek production emphasises the legal dimensions of the migration problem, using Farmakonisi as a starting point in order to ask broader questions about justice. The Trial of Water alludes to the actual, physical struggle of bodies as they cross the waters but also seems to hint at the intangible nature of justice. What is fascinating is the etymology of the island's name. Farmakonisi means the island of the pharmakon, which has a dual meaning: remedy and poison. President of Greek Forum of Refugees, Yonous Muhammadi starts his expert testimony by stressing the paradox of the island's name, suggesting that for migrants, Greece (as the first entry-point to Europe) represents the cure to their troubles but ultimately, for the people who die at sea, it becomes their poison. Interestingly, in ancient Athens, pharmakos was a person who would become the outcast in a process of purification of the city; they were sacrificed, removed from the community so that the cleansing process would be complete. The Farmakonisi becomes a space for such strangers and outcasts, removed from a social or legal framework – the island of the pharmakon and pharmakos. Recently, most of the islands of East Aegean have become farmakonisi; spaces of exclusion, spaces of (failed) attempts at remedying the problem.

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EC: There are lines of connection that I think we might draw between how the state of being 'at sea' is often approached in performance and creative activist work and a common concern with the weight, or weightiness, of the human body. In Anders Lustgarten's Lampedusa (2015) we saw this narrativised in the

fisherman-turned-rescuer's description of how difficult it is to haul a drowned body from the sea and into a boat.

MZ: He says that 'handling the corpses is like oiled, lumpy rubbish bags sliding through your fingers'.

EC: And in The Dead Are Coming it's in the solidity of a casket, the grim knowledge that it contains a drowned person, and the recorded spectacle of its sombre transportation for burial. The same can be said of the creative activist strategy of the 'die-in' – which we're seeing staged across Europe at the moment as the refugee crisis intensifies – where activists communicate via their living bodies, indexing a state of being 'in repose', as it were, but en masse and on public ground.

MZ: There is a preoccupation with bodies, their weight, as well as metaphorically of them weighing on us. The body occupies the domain of representation until it violates this framework, until it disturbs it and returns to haunt us. The violation is what surfaces, or emerges. But paradoxically it is also what is weighing us down.

EC: This need to communicate or convey the weightiness of the body at sea, and in particular the substantiality of the drowned body, also seems to speak to a representational urgency that bleeds out of the gaps and absences across visible and tangible domains in this context, where 'irregular' maritime crossings (and failed crossings) are comprehended most often by means other than embodied encounter.

MZ: The dramaturgy of Case Farmakonisi emerges from this inability to narrate, to convey and ultimately comprehend what might be occurring during a maritime crossing. Audiences witness the actors reenacting testimonies by three anonymous witnesses but neither the senior coast guard officer, nor the survivors' lawyer or a psychologist who worked closely with them, though, was at sea the night of the incident. The actors set up the scene for each testimony while debating who would be best suited to deliver verbatim material from

interviews. What we see is mediated testimonies, not authentic reenactment of evidence, even though one of the starting points for the piece was miscarriage of justice and a number of visual markers onstage index a courtroom – papers pinned on a large board in the background, an OHP projector with images, a screen where we watch recorded material and a pile of overturned furniture that make up a courtroom.

EC: Something particularly compelling about The Dead are Coming is the way the interventions were situated uneasily between different domains of representation and social practice – or perhaps more precisely, between artistic performance, political convocation and religious event. The activist/performers were engaged in *real* burials of *real* corpses. Its choreography was religious, with prayers led by an imam, but at the same time the event was attended by members of the media, framed by political speeches, recorded for public dissemination and ultimately agitation. I find this multivalency quite unsettling. The burial video posted by the Center for Political Beauty on their YouTube page is something of a semiotic car crash (as seems inevitable when we consider what the decision to record a burial implies). Certain elements of the event seem to merge European funeral and corporate/convention dress codes: the sombre pallbearers, older white (presumably German) men, wear black suits, black ties, white gloves and white name badges. Other male and female participants are identifiable by their dress as Islamic.

MZ: The problematic of burial was touched on in Case Farmakonisi, too, when Muhammadi reminded that there is no mosque in Athens. How can you bury the dead when a space dedicated to practicing your religion is absent? I find the burial video of The Dead are Coming – a strange mélange of Christian and Muslim practices – disconcerting and comical. But the sincerity and seriousness of the collective's written and verbal proclamations suggests to me that its aesthetics are probably not intentionally comical or satirical.

EC: The visual grammar of their burial video and photographs generates a bizarre collision of respectfulness and flippancy. The visual juxtapositions in the video were quite stark: a line of EU national flags, a velvet VIP rope and a wide

red carpet demarcating an area of empty seats laid out for German dignitaries, including Angela Merkel, set alongside the fresh grave, into which participants took turns to throw a handful of soil. The participants and spectators were also incongruous in their apparent purposes and agendas. In a separate video filmed during another burial event, women in Islamic hijab were lined up alongside journalists (the clicking of cameras is clearly audible in this recording) ('German Art Activists', Getty 2015).

MZ: I wonder whether we can identify here a particular kind of aesthetic that emerges in works about or responding to maritime crossings or dying at sea. I would argue that 'aesthetics of sincerity' underpins such works, though manifests itself in different ways. In Case Farmakonisi, we can trace it in the 'rehearsal-like' style of the production when staging the testimonies, in the actors' open admission that they find theatre a limited medium to tackle the issue and that the act of standing in for the refugees might be inadequate. In Lampedusa, the sincerity comes through characterisation, particularly of the Italian fisherman and through physical closeness between actors and the audience. It seems to me that through such 'aesthetics of sincerity', performance works question how each one of us acts when confronted with this crisis.

EC: The prolonged eye contact that the actors initiated with particular audience members is something I recall vividly from Lampedusa – I squirmed a bit when my turn came – this worked politically, of course, as an implicit challenge to hold the gaze, and there was a face-to-face intensity to it. This contrasts, I think, with the very different demands of the face initiated by Center for Political Beauty members, who appear in their videos with ostentatious black smears of oil daubed across their cheeks and foreheads. The activists' online headshots reiterate the technique, one that I suppose is meant to approximate the appearance of a manual workers (or, grave diggers?). But the glamour of the headshots alongside the smears seems slightly overwrought.

MZ: Possibly, there is an odd kind of equivalence between the extravagant politics of The Dead are Coming – both title and the project itself, described by

the creative activists as 'Performance art of an unprecedented magnitude' and the extravagant politics of Germany's apparent magnanimity in announcing in August its intention to accept all Syrian asylum seekers.

EC: Especially given that the German government was the explicit target of the Centre for Political Beauty's intervention in The Dead are Coming. According to their website:

The German government's worst nightmare is coming true: Over the next few days, refugees who drowned or starved to death at Europe's external borders on their way to a new life, will be brought to Berlin. The aim is to tear down the walls surrounding Europe's sense of compassion. Together with the victims' relatives, we opened inhumane graves and exhumed the bodies. They are now on their way to Germany. ('The Dead Are Coming', 2015)

I think you're right that we can draw parallels between the bold, gestural politics (the 'aggressive humanism') of The Dead are Coming and Germany's landmark announcement on Syrians. At the same time, a dichotomy emerges between the two with regard to transnational movements or passages. The Center for Political Beauty created their procession of corpses from the southern borders of Europe to Germany in order to embody and spatialise a sense of shame and European humanitarian obligation. On the other hand, the recent succession of bus journeys and marches on foot by migrants, very much alive, en route to Germany, has given rise to a new wave of community support, which has manifested in citizen-mobilised assistance on the ground in Austria and Germany, not to mention the spectacle of cheering grounds offering welcome (The Guardian, Wall Street Journal).

MZ: In terms of imagery, soon after the German government's announcement, photographs began to appear and circulate online portraying Merkel as the migrants' heroine, champion or mother, evoking past examples of glorifying Syria's now discredited leader, Bashar al-Assad (BBC). But, in another context, since the eruption of the Eurozone crisis in 2010 and subsequent austerity

policies and socio-political turmoil in Greece, we have seen the proliferation of radically different representations of the Chancellor. That controversial and populist imagery, often problematically conjuring a continuity between contemporary German politics and its Nazi past, does not fail to point to the undeniable, growing power of Germany and the making of a 'German Europe'.

EC: The Syrians' adoration of Merkel's image stands in stark opposition to the Center for Political Beauty's use of chairs set out at one of the funerals for the German Chancellor and her colleagues, all of which remained, as intended, conspicuously empty. Image economies seem so crucial at the moment given how we've seen in recent weeks the way some photographic distillations of migrant experiences have the power to prick consciences across an entire continent.

MZ: This summer we have witnessed an unprecedented mobilisation of citizens attempting to help migrants in any possible way and this may be partly because we have been 'inundated' by migrant images. When I think back at the summer of 2015, two images are indelible: the image of cheering crowds welcoming migrants and the image of Aylan Kurdi lying on a beach. Both demand difficult questions about the way empathy is generated, performed or sustained as well as about the spaces that migrant bodies can populate. I am thinking of how modalities of life and death co-exist in spaces that are designated as spaces of leisure, for instance on the beach.

EC: Absolutely – it's this horror cinematography that has truly grabbed headlines lately, where beach holiday zones are becoming palimpsestically co-encoded as death zones. The spatial convergence is repugnant to us, appalling because such human suffering shouldn't be getting tangled beneath our very feet. When it does, we're obliged to respond. It comes as no surprise, of course, that an image of a dead child on a beach was what prompted the British Prime Minister to preface his response explicitly 'as a father'.

MZ: What is it that instigates our reactions to images of migrants' arrivals or demise? We see the migrant as a victim, we sympathise, we empathise. But,

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when we see the image of the boy on the beach, what do we actually see? Can we move past the initial shock of loss of human life or joy of arrival and think through the structural problems that perpetuate such injustice?

EC: That photograph looked somehow like a 'mistake'. My overwhelming (and probably solipsistic) response was something like a cognitive dissonance, a sense of 'that's not what a child on a beach is meant to look like'.

MZ: When we are confronted with such imagery, we don't understand what we see. We misinterpret it. We see the image of the boy and remember the image of another child playing, perhaps ourselves. The present image pricks and haunts our past. With the moment of arrival we think in cinematic terms or a kind of narrative logic, a way of organising the world (or representing it), that we have developed in a world that sets out clear lines of progression. We think 'this is the end of the line'. That's the end, you've made it.

EC: Or the horror of seeing the moment of not making it. Which is also an ending.

MZ: But, for me, what's at stake is not ultimately the mode of arrival but what happens afterwards. When you may become living dead. Arrived and in detention or arrived without access to the legal labour force. You may disappear. Why are we celebrating the arrival? Or denouncing failed arrival? This potentially renders the migrant journey, the perilous crossing a game for our imaginaries. Or at least renders the arrival / failed arrival a moment of closure. But this reading of the moment of arrival as closure fails to recognise how the struggle continues, beyond the moments that have been documented in journalism or performance. For instance, shortly after thousands of refugees arrived in Germany from Budapest in early September, the federal government introduced new measures, including a decision to prolong the period that refugees have to spend in Reception centres from three to six months.



EC: What does all this mean for how effectively artists and activists engage with the crisis of migration and the challenge of empathy in the face of migrants, living or dead?

MZ: How can we talk about the moment of arrival in meaningful terms? How can we represent it without implying that it's the end of the line? What is at stake is the transition between the moment of arrival and becoming a citizen. Because we fantasise and fetishise the moment of arrival we fail to perceive what comes after, the transition of the homo sacer, the pharmakos to the citizen. The Trial of Water goes beyond the perilous passage, ending with the footage that Azas and his collaborator filmed on the road to the prison, where they meet the 19-year old Syrian captain, who was (wrongly) found guilty of the Farmakonisi deaths and was convicted to 125 years imprisonment! Has this young man arrived? For me, the current situation with the law is that these people will never be able to arrive, alive or dead. The real question is how can you arrive if justice doesn't arrive.

EC: You're right, and this seems to contrast with The Dead are Coming and its extension of the moment of not making it.

MZ: That piece seems to me not only to attempt to elongate the arrival moment, but also to make the countries that do not have coastlines experience what has become banal reality in the world of, for example, the fisherman in Lampedusa.

EC: What does it mean to arrive, then? Too often at the moment, in Europe, and in Australia, to arrive is to still be at sea.

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We're not going to bury him here. She pointed to the white hills towards the Cueva de los Rosas where the skull of the most ancient man in Europe had been excavated, the one who had lived more than a million years ago, and she said, The body will rest over there. (Saramago 1985: 329)



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